



UMass requests proposals for Springfield satellite center

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Kumble R. Subbaswamy, Chancellor at the University of Massachusetts, second from left greets Springfield Mayor Domenic J. Sarno, as Henry M. Thomas, left UMass Board of Trustees chairman, left and Robert L. Caret, right UMass President, look on. UMass is looking at creating a satellite center in Springfield and seeking requests for proposals for classroom space. *(Republican file photo)*

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SPRINGFIELD — The **University of Massachusetts** is taking yet another stride toward a greater presence in Springfield by requesting proposals for potential classroom and office space to establish a satellite center here.

UMass is looking for 25,000 square feet of space that it would use for classrooms, faculty offices and other uses, with the option of doubling the amount of space at a later date, UMass spokeswoman Ann Scales said.

"We're dipping our toe in the water," she said. The university needs to evaluate whether it can afford to create such a center here. UMass also needs to know what kind of space is available.

UMass and Springfield officials have been talking about creating a satellite campus for nearly two years, ever since UMass President **Robert Caret** took a tour of the state in October 2011. In June, UMass hired **Jason Irizarry** to the position of director of urban education as a way to build a stronger partnership between UMass and Springfield.

Mayor Domenic J. Sarno, who has been pushing for the campus here, was unavailable for comment.

Kevin E. Kennedy, Springfield's chief development officer, praised the university's plans.

"We are pleased they are initiating that step, and we look forward to a successful RFP process, and hopefully opening a satellite campus in Springfield in the fall of 2014," Kennedy said.

There have been ongoing discussions between the university and city officials, Kennedy said.

"The satellite campus in Springfield is as important as the casino, is as important as a revitalized Union Station," Kennedy said. "It brings a life of its own. It brings vitality, it brings youth."

Before creating the center, Caret had been looking at whether Springfield would support a center and determined that it can.

The **UMass Donahue** Institute identified Springfield as a viable site because the UMass Amherst campus already has a strong presence in the city.

"We very much want to open a satellite center in Springfield because an essential aspect of our mission of service to the Commonwealth is working to build better lives and futures for people and communities, which is what this would represent," Caret said in a statement. "We know that the demand is there and that the business and political leadership supports it. The questions before us now are whether it is feasible to do this and whether there are sufficient resources available to help us meet this challenge."

At this stage in planning, at least several and possibly all five of the UMass campuses would provide classes. Some classes would be taught on site and others through UMassOnline, Scales said. The program would possibly offer two-year associate's degrees that could lead to bachelor degrees.

The satellite center would also serve as the new home for the **UMass Amherst** Springfield Partnership, a project designed to promote Springfield as a center of environmentally beneficial green industries, boost the city's arts and creative economy and expand relevant university teaching and outreach initiatives.

UMass already has a design center at Court Square and is a partner with Baystate Health in the Pioneer Valley Life Sciences Institute research operation in the city's North End. UMass also is a partner with Springfield Technical Community College at the Scibelli Enterprise Center and Business Incubator at Technology Park.

UMass Amherst Chancellor Kumble Subbaswamy has said he supports the creation of such a center provided funding can be found.

UMass-affiliated New England Public Radio will be moving to Springfield in the spring.

Proposals for the classroom space are due at 2 p.m. on Sept. 3 and can be sent to Katherine Craven, executive director, UMBA Massachusetts Building Authority, 225 Franklin Street, 12th Floor, Boston, MA 02110.

*Staff writer **Peter Goonan** contributed to this report*

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